

Three Visions

It's human to lie. Most of the time we can't even be honest with ourselves.

The Commoner (Kichijiro Ueda), Rashomon (film), 1950.

The nation state of Australia was born on a lie – ‘Terra Nullius’, the unoccupied land. The area now called Sydney is an Aboriginal place; historically, conceptually, and spiritually. I'm informed by Wikipedia that memory develops quickly and then slow and reflectively, in three stages in our minds; encoding, storage, and retrieval. Three contemporary Aboriginal artists (Karla Dickens, Adam Hill, aka Blak Douglas, and Jason Wing) and my humble narrator self; Djon Mundine, have put themselves in the belly of the Rainbow and attempted to open the door to the house of memory and stimulate your emotions. To allow you to cry, to laugh, and relate, but to lead you to reflect, think, and feel. To be inspired to action.

‘For Aboriginal people, the coming of Cook was not a positive event – it has resulted in death, displacement and destruction of our societies.’ My name is Djon Mundine and I am a Bandjalung man from the northern rivers region of NSW. The area of Sydney is spiritually my grandmother's dreaming. The year before I was born (1951) the Japanese film Rashomon (1950) was released. Rashomon is the name of a main gateway to the city now called Kyoto; a metaphor for a gateway to truth, and the film, explores how a single event (a murder) can be seen in completely contradictory versions, complicating the truth of memory and justice; a discursive discourse to reach the light.

Wikipedia further divides memory into three forms, sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. In academia, there is a three-part progression or development towards a truth; thesis, anti-thesis, and conclusion. Memory, denial, resolution. To some extent the artwork here comes from a time of a ‘visible NSW Aboriginal art voice’, but cynically, is overshadowed by a sense of alienation, absence, and disenchantment, when the state gallery, still remains, held hostage to the original crime of ‘terra nullius’ – there are no Aboriginals in eastern Australia; didn't we kill them all. Three views or lines of historical debate; left-right-middle, black-white, and now, possibly for Australia, the middle path of truth and justice.

History can be thought of in three ways; long past natural events, people, and actions, institutional developments, and, the personal details of the lives of individual human beings. There are numerous Aboriginal stories of how the supreme creative spirit; the Rainbow Serpent, swallowed human beings (death) and traveled under the earth only to return to the surface and regurgitate these people as reborn and revitalized from the revelatory experience.

The art creations here by Adam Hill, Karla Dickens, and Jason Wing, and my own 'sacred scar' exposed are 'dialectic devices to discuss the coming of the British Imperial power represented by James Cook ... and the results of colonisation. The British view of Cook's voyage is well documented and published. Aboriginal people's thoughts and reactions were, until recent times, rarely recorded, and not discussed publicly by current Australian national society. These art pieces are the view of the "other", in the "first voice" of the other.' as 'dialectic devices to discuss the coming of the British Imperial power represented by James Cook ... and the results of colonisation. The British view of Cook's voyage is well documented and published. Aboriginal people's thoughts and reactions were, until recent times, rarely taken into account, let alone recorded, and not discussed publicly by current Australian national society. These art pieces are the view of the "other", in the "first voice" of the other.'

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The sunken 'armored casemate' bunkers cut into the bed rock walls of George's Head, could also be referencing the 'western' trope of 'Plato's cave' where those imprisoned within, can

only see shadows of the reality outside, and speculate on what is the truth from the shadow 'moves' and power plays of the brutal colonialism we Aboriginal people have endured. Colonised, disempowered, but made conscious of our sovereignty in this encounter, and led to our reclaiming of it.

Djon Mundine OAM